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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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----------099534 241245Z /43
R 241050Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6849
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1651

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GY
SUBJECT: BURNHAM CONTINUES THE ATTACK ON OPPONENTS OF THE
CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

REF: GEORGETOWN 1560

1. (SUMMARY) PRIMIN BURNHAM TOOK ADVANTAGE OF TWO RECENT PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED ON MAY 21 IN THE GUYANA CHRONICLE TO CONTINUE HIS STRIDENT ATTACK ON OPPONENTS OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION. HE CLAIMED THAT THOSE WHO HAD OPPOSED GUYANESE SOCIALISM HAD BEEN ROUTED IN THE PAST, AND WARNED THAT SHOULD THEY ATTEMPT TO REGROUP, "OUR STEEL IS NOW SHARPER." (END SUMMARY)

2. AT A PUBLIC RALLY AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE ON MAY 18, ORGANIZED TO MARK HIS TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY AS A PARLIAMENTARIAN, PRIMIN BURNHAM DECLARED THAT THE REACTIONARIES
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IN GUYANA WERE FIGHTING THEIR LAST STRUGGLE. IN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO RECENT STRIKES AND PUBLIC MEETINGS OPPOSING HIS PROPOSALS FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION, HE WARNED THAT THOSE WHO ATTEMPTED TO MAKE TROUBLE WOULD BE DEALT WITH "CONDIGNLY," AND WISHED FOR ALL THE JUDASES A DEATH LESS PAINFUL THAN THAT WHICH JUDAS ISCARIOT MET. HE CONCLUDED HIS ADDRESS BY ASSERTING THE A "NO" VOTE ON THE

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REFERENDUM WAS A VOTE FOR THE OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S
PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP), OTHER REACTIONARY GROUPS, AND
THE MAYHEM AND VIOLENCE OF THE EARLY 1960'S. BY
CONTRAST, A "YES" VOTE WAS A VOTE FOR THE RULING PEOPLE'S
NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC), PEACE, AND AN END TO THE
EXPLOITATION OF POOR FARMERS BY WEALTHY LANDLORDS.
(COMMENT: THOUGH THE RALLY WAS PERSONAL AND PARTISAN--
TO BURNHAM AND THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS WHICH HE
LEADS--A CENTRAL FEATURE WAS A MARCH PAST BY THE GUYANA
NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCE AND A "PLEDGE OF UNSWERVING
LOYALTY TO YOUR LEADERSHIP" BY BRIGADIER PRICE, THE GDF
COMMANDER. PRICE'S PLEDGE ENDED WITH "LONG LIVE SOCIALISM,
LONG LIVE THE COMRADE LEADER." GDF UNTIL NOW HAS ATTEMPTED
TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST THE OVERT APPEARANCE OF BEING
APOLITICAL. END COMMENT)

3. IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED
DAILY (THE GUYANA CHRONICLE) ON MAY 21, BURNHAM TOUCHED ON GUYANA'S
RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., THE IMF (SEPTELS), AND THE NEED FOR A
NEW CONSTITUTION. THE PRIMIN REITERATED HIS OFT-REPEATED
CONTENTION THAT THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION DOES NOT RE-
FLECT THE "PRESENT MOOD, THRUST AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE
NATION." AS ENVISAGED BY THE PNC, THE NEW CONSTITUTION
WOULD KEEP THE RIGHT TO PERSONAL PROPERTY, BUT END THE
RIGHT TO PRIVATE, EXPLOITATIVE PROPERTY. IN ADDITION,
THE NEW DOCUMENT WOULD CREATE AN EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT
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WHO WOULD BE CHIEF OF STATE AND HEAD OF GOVERNMENT.
THE ROLE OF PRESIDENT WOULD BE REDESIGNED, IN ORDER TO
GIVE THAT OFFICE REAL POWERS THAT COULD BE QUICKLY
EXERCISED. BURNHAM ALSO STATED DURING THE INTERVIEW
THAT HIS TRADITIONAL POLITICAL RIVAL, PPP HEAD, CHEDDI
JAGAN, WAS "TOTALLY INCAPABLE OF RUNNING A GOVERNMENT
IN GUYANA OR ELSEWHERE."

4. ON SUNDAY, MAY 21, IN A SPEECH AT THE ANNUAL YOUTH
RALLY, BURNHAM AGAIN BITTERLY ATTACKED THE COALITION
WHICH IS OPPOSING HIM ON THE REFERENDUM. HE CLAIMED THAT
THE "RIGHTISTS," I.E., THE LAWYERS AND THE CHURCH, HAD
JOINED INTO CONCUBINAGE WITH THOSE WHO CALLED THEMSELVES
SOCIALISTS, I.E., THE PPP. (HE SAID HE WAS RELUCTANT
TO CALL THE "COPULATING BEDFELLOWS.") HE DEFENDED THE
GOG'S EXPROPRIATION OF CHURCH SHCOOLS WITHOUT COMPENSA-
TION,AND ASSERTED THAT TO THE CHURCH, GOD WAS NOT A
SPIRIT, BUT HAD BECOME MATERIALIZED IN THE FORM OF
PRIVATE PROPERTY. THE PRIMIN ACCUSED LAWYERS OF BEING
CONCERNED FIRST WITH THEIR LEGAL FEES, AND CLAIMED THAT
THEY WISHED TO MILK THE PUBLIC "LIKE A COW." HE
CHARACTERIZED THE OPPOSITION UNITED FORCE PARTY AS

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THE "UNITED FARCE." HE OFFERED TO DEBATE ANY OF HIS
OPPONENTS WITH ONE LIP CLOSED, AS HE DID NOT LIKE TO
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CHILDREN. BURNHAM SAID HE MADE NO
PRETENSE OF SPEAKING FOR THE PNC, AND RECOGNIZED THAT
HE WAS NOT AN "OBEAH MAN" (I.E., A WITCH DOCTOR)
WHO COULD READ THE MINDS OF OTHERS. THE PRIMIN CONCLUDED
HIS SPEECH BY PROMISING THAT THE GOG WOULD BUILD WITH
THE YOUTH BY NEXT YEAR, A "YOUNG PEOPLE'S COOPERATIVE
PALACE" WHERE THE YOUTH COULD STUDY "ANY CONCEIVABLE
THING UNDER THE SUN." (COMMENT: THIS APPARENTLY WAS
A SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT PROMISE MADE BY A MAN CARRIED
AWAY WITH HIS OWN ORATORY. IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED
CHRONICLE FOR MAY 22, IN ITS REPORT OF THE SPEECH,
"BUILD" HAD BECOME "ESTABLISHED," AND IN THE EVENING
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CITIZEN'S REPORT ON YOUTH DAY THERE WAS NO MENATION OF
A "YOUTH PALACE.")

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1651

5. COMMENT: PRIMIN BURNHAM'S ALMOST NON-STOP POLITICKING

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OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS REPRESENTS MORE CONCENTRATED PUBLIC EXPOSURE DOMESTICALLY THAN HE HAS HAD AT ANY TIME SINCE WELL BEFORE HIS HEART ATTACK IN FEBRUARY 1977. HE APPEARS BOTH CONCERNED AND IRRITATED BY THE OPPOSITION WHICH HAS DEVELOPED IN THE MATTER OF HIS PROPOSALS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND THE VIRULENCE AND PERSONAL NATURE OF SOME OF HIS REMARKS WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT SOME OF THE CRITICS AND THEIR CRITICISM HAVE GOTTEN WELL UNDER HIS SKIN. THE TEMPERATURE OF THE PUBLIC DEBATE OVER THE REFERENDUM AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IS ALREADY HIGH; IF IT WAXES WARMER BETWEEN NOW AND THE DATE OF THE BALLOTING IN JULY, GEORGETOWN'S ANNUAL "MAY-JUNE" RAINY SEASON COULD TURN TO STEAM.

6. SOME OF BURNHAM'S CRITICS ARE NOW SUGGESTING, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE ELABORATE OBSERVANCE OF HIS TWNETY-FIVE YEARS AS A PARLIAMENTARIAN COMPLETE WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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MILITARY MARCH PAST AND PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE BY THE GDF'S COMMANDING OFFICER, THAT THE ONE TANGIBLE RESULT OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO NORTH KOREA WAS HIS DETERMINATION TO ESTABLISH A PERSONALITY CULT IN GUYANA. END COMMENT.
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